

**Security Council**

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Thirty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia**I. Introduction**

1. By its resolution 2239 (2015), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2016 and requested me to keep it informed of the situation in Liberia and the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The present report provides a midterm update on major developments since my report of 13 August 2015 (S/2015/620).

II. Major developments**A. Political situation**

2. Political attention is increasingly focused on the 2017 presidential election, which will be held in a complex political, social and economic situation marked by external economic shocks resulting from the drop in global prices of raw materials, public concern over the Mission's drawdown, challenges posed by the security transition, an increase in public order incidents and limited progress on legislation critical to both the security transition and essential political reforms.

3. The number of candidates for the election continued to grow, together with speculation on potential alliances. Declared candidates include the Vice-President, Joseph Boakai (Unity Party), the Central Bank Governor, Joseph Mills Jones (independent), a Montserrado County Senator, George Weah (Congress for Democratic Change), a Nimba County Senator, Prince Yormie Johnson (independent), a former presidential candidate, Charles Brumskine (Liberty Party), the businessman Benoni Urey (All Liberian Party), the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan (Unity Party), and the former First Lady and Bong County Senator, Jewel Howard Taylor (National Patriotic Party). The Unity Party continued to face departures from its ranks, which culminated in the resignation of four Unity Party legislators during September and October, including the House Speaker.

4. On 14 October, the President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, emphasized in an unscheduled closed-door meeting with the Legislature the need for the passage of bills that would contribute to economic stability and the security transition. On 19 November, in an address to the nation, the President underscored the economic challenges facing the country, while late in November she sought unsuccessfully to



have the Legislature reconvene for a two-week extraordinary session to achieve progress on key economic issues. The Legislature made some progress on security legislation; on 19 January, the Senate voted in favour of the draft firearms and ammunition control act and transmitted it to the House of Representatives for concurrence, where it remains pending. The President re-emphasized the economic challenges during her annual address to the Legislature on 25 January and announced austerity measures to counteract the effects of an expected shortfall in revenues. She also expressed confidence in the Liberian security institutions in the context of the security transition and their taking over of security responsibilities from UNMIL.

5. During the reporting period, there were several high-profile dismissals and resignations from and appointments to the Government. On 24 August, the President dismissed the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, responsible for international cooperation and economic integration, for inappropriate conduct as part of an investigation into the alleged misuse of funds from the Government of Japan. On 9 October, she dismissed the Minister of Internal Affairs, Morris Dukuly, and accepted the resignation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Augustine Ngafuan. On 10 September and 27 November, respectively, county superintendents in Bong and Grand Bassa Counties resigned from their positions following allegations of corruption and abuse of authority. On 6 January, the President nominated the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, Marjon Kamara, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Henrique Tokpa as Minister of Internal Affairs; both were confirmed by the Senate on 26 January.

6. The Lofa County by-election, held as a result of the death of a member of the House of Representatives, was conducted peacefully on 29 December, although the deployment of police was delayed because of the late release of funds. Turnout was 32.6 per cent, and 48.6 per cent of those who voted were women. The National Elections Commission successfully produced a pilot breakdown of voters in the by-election by gender at the time the results were announced. In January, the Commission, as part of a project supported by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, published gender-disaggregated data on voters in the December 2014 senatorial elections.

7. Meanwhile, litigation relating to the 2014 senatorial elections has not been closed, and two cases are still outstanding. The Supreme Court order of 7 August to repeat polls in three precincts in Bong County remains pending, although the independent candidate and current Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Tokpa, decided not to participate in the rerun of the elections. A complaint before the Supreme Court relating to a previously ordered partial recount in Lofa County also remains pending.

8. On 2 and 4 February, during plenary sessions, members of the House of Representatives expressed concern about the security situation in the context of the Mission's drawdown, requested briefings from national security providers and called upon the President to request the United Nations to maintain a considerable UNMIL military and police strength until after the elections in 2017.

B. National reconciliation, political reforms and governance

9. Critical reforms, including the amendment of the Constitution, land reform and decentralization, advanced at a slow pace. Following a setback in the consideration

of the bills on land rights and land authority during an extended session of the Legislature from August to October, the Land Commission embarked on further consultations with stakeholders until its mandate expired on 9 January, although it remained operational after that date. Meanwhile, five of the six land coordination centres that had supported the informal settlement of land disputes were closed because of a lack of funding, creating an additional strain on the capacity of local courts to address land disputes.

10. On 13 August, the President, in a letter to the Legislature, conveyed her views on the 25 proposed amendments presented by the Constitution Review Committee, including her opposition to both the racial requirement for citizenship and the declaration of Liberia as a "Christian State". From 17 to 19 November, the House of Representatives held a retreat with the Committee in Ganta, Nimba County, to consider the views of experts on the proposed amendments. Consultations in the Senate have yet to commence.

11. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights continued to work towards the implementation of the Palava Hut programme for national reconciliation. In September and October 2015, four forums were conducted on Palava Hut practices among various ethnic groups. The resulting report, validated in December, highlighted challenges relating to jurisdiction, operations and general programme implementation. Delays in implementation and the continued lack of capacity of the Commission to lead the process remained a concern.

12. On 15 September, the President issued a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The previous such report had been issued in January 2011. In the report of 15 September, of a total of 207 recommendations, 142 had been or were being implemented, while 18 did not lend themselves to practical implementation. In the report, with respect to lustration, the Supreme Court decision of 2011 that the practice of lustration without due process was unconstitutional is reiterated and advice is requested from the Bar Association before any action is taken. The report indicated that recommendations aimed at fostering good governance, such as payment of reparations and ensuring criminal accountability, would be addressed progressively. On 13 October, the House of Representatives took note of the report and requested additional information from the President, and on 15 October the Senate established a special committee to review the report.

13. There has been some progress in addressing corruption. On 25 August, the former Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority and four co-defendants were convicted of the illegal issuance of private logging permits. The defendants have appealed against the verdict. In November, five senior officers of the Drug Enforcement Agency, including the Chief of Intelligence and the Deputy Chief Investigator, were dismissed following allegations of extortion and bribery. In January, seven senior Liberian National Police officers were suspended and recommended for prosecution following investigations for alleged complicity in armed robberies. In September, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and the Governance Commission completed the draft implementation strategy for the National Code of Conduct, which is aimed at ensuring full compliance with the Code by the end of 2016. Similarly, investigations by the Anti-Corruption Commission led to the trial in December of two former senior officials of the National Port Authority.

However, the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases continued at a slow pace, owing mainly to capacity and funding constraints at the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Ministry of Justice, as well as coordination challenges between the two. In an effort to curb corruption in the judiciary, the Chief Justice suspended two judges on 4 February for interference with due process amounting to corruption.

14. In October, the Public Accounts Committee submitted its findings from public hearings on six General Auditing Commission reports of ministries, agencies and public corporations for endorsement by the plenary of the House of Representatives followed by transmission to the President, with a reminder to implement the recommendations in the reports sent by the Legislature in previous years. The findings of the reports included gross violations of the Public Procurement and Concessions Act of 2010 and the Public Finance Management Act of 2009, poor human resources management and misappropriation of funds. On 27 January, Transparency International issued a global report on perceptions of corruption in which Liberia was ranked joint 83rd out of 168 countries, an improvement from its ranking of 95th out of 175 countries in 2014. According to the same organization, in a regional report published on 1 December, across 28 sub-Saharan African countries, Liberia ranked worst for bribery payments to public officials over the past 12 months and second worst for government efforts to fight corruption.

15. On 9 December, Sweden pledged \$5 million over two years to support decentralization reform. UNMIL continued to support the equipment or construction of 10 of the 15 county service centres, which provide public services that were previously available only in Monrovia.

C. Security situation

16. The security situation in Liberia remained generally stable. However, a series of violent incidents demonstrated the continuing potential for destabilization arising from growing social tensions relating to an increase in layoffs and concessions, land disputes, limited access to livelihood opportunities and porous borders. Mob justice resulted in several incidents targeting, in particular, individuals suspected of involvement in armed robberies and ritualistic killings. Such incidents appeared to be on the increase during the reporting period.

17. There were several violent incidents relating to concessions. On 12 October, two security guards at the China Union mine in Bong County were killed by armed robbers. Five suspects were arrested. On 26 October, 50 former employees of a private security company forcibly entered the premises of ArcelorMittal in Grand Bassa County during a protest over benefits allegedly owed to them. Also in Grand Bassa, on 9 November, six armed men attacked the offices of Equatorial Palm Oil in an attempt to steal the payroll cash. In September, at the Cocopa rubber plantation in Nimba County, interventions by the Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia calmed workers who had threatened mass action against the non-payment of salaries. However, as the non-payment continued, workers threatened a manager on 3 February and set fire to parts of the plantation on 6 February. In Montserrado County, evictions from and demolitions of illegal structures on land designated for an industrial park proceeded from 18 January to 5 February without serious protest, following proactive UNMIL and government interventions. Occupants in the Capitol Bypass area in Monrovia facing an eviction

notice protested on 6 February, blockaded the road near the police headquarters and threw stones at vehicles until the police dispersed them.

18. There were also several incidents of vigilantism. On 19 August, in Nimba County, a mob fired on three suspected armed robbers, injuring two of them. On 13 September, a fight at a mining camp in Grand Gedeh County resulted in a mob breaking into the camp's police cell and beating a man to death. A total of 40 suspects were arrested. On 2 December, in Monrovia, the discovery of the bodies of two children inside a vehicle resulted in local residents setting on fire the home of the vehicle's owner, who they believed had killed the children for ritual purposes.

19. The death of a motorcyclist in Nimba County, alleged to be a ritualistic killing, led to a mass protest of union members on 30 September against the perceived ineffectiveness of the police in addressing a series of suspected ritualistic killings in the county. The protest turned into a riot when a crowd attacked and ransacked a police depot, freed detainees, burned homes and cars and engaged in widespread looting. Public order was restored by the national police with UNMIL assistance. Forty-five people were arrested and are awaiting trial, 42 of them charged with rioting and arson and 3 with murder.

20. Challenges remained in the ability of the Liberian institutions to respond rapidly and effectively to violent public disturbances and dispense justice. In particular, the inadequate and inefficient deployment of resources across the country and a still weak command and control structure hampered the police response. The police, however, exhibited improved capacity to plan and execute deployment to ensure security at scheduled events, as was demonstrated during two international football matches held in Monrovia on 8 October and 13 November.

D. Regional issues

21. While the security situation in the border areas remained calm, sporadic violence and incidents of illegal farming in the areas bordering Côte d'Ivoire continued to occur. On 1 September, following a fact-finding mission, Grand Gedeh County authorities expressed concern about continued farming activities by armed Ivorian and Burkinabé elements in Liberian territory. According to a complaint lodged with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in one such incident a group of armed Ivorians and Burkinabé reportedly injured a resident of Joe Village, Grand Gedeh County. At the same time, the alleged sale of land by some county officials to Ivorian and Burkinabé nationals further complicated the situation. Meanwhile, on 2 December, an armed attack targeting Ivorian security forces was carried out in Olodio, Côte d'Ivoire, 20 km from the border with Liberia, which resulted in 11 deaths and the flight of 38 persons into Liberia. No evidence was established of involvement in the attack from the Liberian side of the border.

22. The second meeting of the joint council of chiefs and elders was held in Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire, from 16 to 18 January. The meeting brought together Liberian and Ivorian traditional and community leaders and administrative authorities to discuss the strengthening of cross-border collaboration and mechanisms for improving peace and security in the border areas. It concluded with the signing of a communiqué in the presence of the Presidents of the two countries, reflecting the commitment to coordinated border stabilization efforts, including the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees from Liberia. During the closing

ceremony, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, announced that the Ivorian border with Liberia would reopen in March and called for the continued presence of UNMIL in Liberia until after the Liberian national elections in 2017. Subsequently, in a joint letter dated 29 January 2016 addressed to the Secretary-General, both Presidents requested the maintenance of the United Nations missions in the two countries, including the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire quick-reaction force, until after the 2017 elections.

E. Humanitarian situation

23. On 3 September, following an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Margibi County detected on 29 June, Liberia was declared Ebola-free for the second time. However, a new outbreak was detected in Montserrado County on 19 November. As no new cases had been reported during the following 42-day period, Liberia was declared Ebola-free for a third time on 14 January. The effective response to contain both outbreaks, particularly in contact tracing and monitoring, demonstrated that the Government was gradually improving its capacity to handle such emergencies. However, on 15 January, the first confirmed Ebola-related death in Sierra Leone since the country was declared Ebola-free on 7 November underlined the risk of relapse. The World Health Organization has cautioned that flare-ups of Ebola cases remain likely in the coming months, highlighting the need for sustained vigilance and elevated response capabilities.

24. As at 15 February, Liberia was hosting 31,096 registered Ivorian refugees, of whom 22,597 were residing in camps and 8,499 with host communities. A tripartite meeting involving the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, held in Monrovia on 9 and 10 December, resulted in the voluntary repatriation of 1,117 refugees later that month, despite the continued closure of the border. Although recent attacks along the south-eastern border with Côte d'Ivoire seemed to have slowed the pace of voluntary repatriations, the voluntary return of Ivorian refugees continued; a total of 6,042 have been successfully repatriated and resettled in Côte d'Ivoire since 18 December.

F. Human rights situation

25. In September, Liberia delivered its response to the Human Rights Council on the 186 recommendations in the universal periodic review of May 2015. The Government accepted 147 of the recommendations, including on issues relating to sexual and gender-based violence; access to justice; economic, social and cultural rights; and, in a positive departure from the first cycle of the universal periodic review, in 2011, the criminalization of female genital mutilation. The remaining 39 recommendations were noted, including those relating to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and the abolition of the death penalty. On 19 September, the Government extended a standing invitation to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

26. Liberia further engaged with United Nations human rights mechanisms by finalizing, with UNMIL support, its common core document, which constituted a significant step in addressing the backlog in its reporting on human rights treaty obligations. In October, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women reviewed the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Liberia. In its concluding observations, the Committee called for the elimination of discriminatory and harmful practices, full criminalization of female genital mutilation and measures to increase women's participation in the political sphere. However, implementation of Liberia's national human rights action plan continued to be hampered, largely because of capacity gaps within the leading ministries and key oversight institutions, such as the Independent National Commission on Human Rights.

27. In October, the Commission published its first annual report, covering 2014. In the report, critical human rights issues were highlighted and a series of recommendations formulated relating to education, health, freedom of the press, women's rights, sexual and gender-based violence and pretrial detention. However, the Commission's failure to establish a functional public complaints mechanism and monitoring structures following the issuance of the report limited the effective implementation of its mandate. A list of recommended candidates to the Commission was presented to the President in August 2015. Four commissioners were appointed on 6 January, and two posts still remain vacant.

28. In December, a second judge was appointed to Criminal Court E to adjudicate rape cases. In addition, a bill on domestic violence is currently under review by the Legislature. Public outreach continued with the "He for She" campaign, launched by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on 5 June 2015 to encourage men and boys to stand up against sexual and gender-based violence and promote gender equity and equality. In December, UNMIL launched a campaign against sexual exploitation and abuse, in addition to the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence" campaign nationwide.

29. During the reporting period, the Mission monitored and documented more than 15 alleged serious human rights violations committed across the country by Liberian security sector personnel, 13 of which involved police officers, including one rape, six physical assaults and two cases of torture. While internal investigations have been initiated in many cases, progress has been slow. In addition, investigations were ongoing in the case of a 19-year-old woman who, according to the police, hanged herself on 20 October while in police detention in Montserrado County. In another case, on 13 September, the Deputy Director for Operations of the Executive Protection Service allegedly assaulted a woman with a broken bottle, resulting in his dismissal the following day.

30. On 18 December, the Mission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly published a report entitled "An assessment of human rights issues emanating from traditional practices in Liberia", with the aim of drawing to the attention of the Government and other stakeholders the adverse consequences on human rights and the rule of law of some traditional practices. In an official communication, the Minister of Justice informed UNMIL of his decision to instruct relevant ministries and government institutions to implement the recommendations in the report, as appropriate.

G. Economic situation

31. Ebola virus disease and the drop in global commodity prices has had a negative impact on economic recovery and growth in Liberia. Gross domestic product growth

projections were revised downward to 0.3 per cent in 2015, from 0.7 per cent in 2014, owing to a reduction in production and investment in the commodities sector, particularly in iron ore and rubber. Revenue from taxes on income and profit from international trade fell from \$41.0 million in the first quarter of the 2014/15 fiscal year to \$39.7 million in the same quarter of the 2015/16 fiscal year. The comparative outlook for core revenue fell from \$46.5 million in September 2014 to \$34.6 million in September 2015. The current account deficit worsened from around 28 per cent of gross domestic product in 2013 to around 31 per cent in 2014, owing mainly to a sharp decline in exports caused by Ebola and lower commodity prices, which were only partially offset by Ebola-related donor assistance and lower oil prices. Gross international reserves declined from \$411 million at the end of 2014 to \$394 million in September 2015. On 19 January, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning announced that the approved national budget for 2015/16 would need to be reduced by around \$70 million (from \$622.7 million to \$552.8 million).

III. Development of national security and justice capacities

A. Security transition

32. In resolution 2239 (2015), the Security Council emphasized that the Government of Liberia bears primary and ultimate responsibility for security and the protection of its population, affirmed its expectation that the Government would assume fully its complete security responsibilities from UNMIL no later than 30 June 2016, and requested UNMIL, from 1 July 2016, to support the Liberian security agencies in protecting civilians in the event of a deterioration of the security situation that could risk a strategic reversal of peace and stability. Accordingly, 30 June 2016 will signal a clear transition of the Mission's security support to the Government, both in terms of its role as a responder and the cessation of specific security-related tasks. The Government's transition plan includes these tasks and works towards the sustainable assumption of security responsibilities by addressing areas critical to the development of Liberia's security sector, such as leadership, oversight, institutional reform and the decentralization of security institutions. My Special Representative continued to engage actively with the Government and international partners to support progress in all aspects of the security transition.

33. Of the 10 specific security tasks performed by UNMIL when the Government's plan was endorsed by the National Security Council on 6 March 2015, six tasks, including airfield maintenance, security escort for cash transfers, armed security at the two national prisons and static guard duty at three key national installations, have already been handed over to the Government. Progress is being made towards the handover of the remaining four tasks (security for very important persons, inspection of Government-owned weapons, maritime patrolling and explosive ordnance disposal). Funding delays resulted in timeline adjustments for security for very important persons; the task is now scheduled for transfer in May 2016. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2237 (2015), UNMIL will continue weapons inspections until June 2016.

34. In the meantime, delayed action on the passage of key security sector legislation and gaps in funding for security transition activities continue to impede

progress. To date, of the 206 activities that underpin a successful transition of security responsibilities, in accordance with the Government's plan, only 14 per cent have been fully achieved, 65 per cent are on schedule, 4 per cent are behind schedule, 1 per cent are significantly behind schedule, and 16 per cent have not started. It must be recalled that the initial transition plan was drafted and costed at more than \$104 million. The funding was subsequently reduced through various rounds of planning to \$38 million. As none of the benchmarks or activities were ever reduced, both the Government of Liberia and UNMIL are struggling to perform in the delivery of the plan. In the light of financial challenges facing the country, the Government was able to disburse only \$10 million of the \$20 million allocated for the transition in the national budget. Revised appropriations within the budget, if endorsed by the Legislature, would result in the final allocation for the transition totalling \$13 million rather than the expected \$20 million. In the absence of sufficient financial support to the transition process from donors, a stock-taking exercise has been initiated to determine, in line with the available resources, the priority areas that require attention before June, and areas that can be looked at over the longer term. It is expected that this undertaking will also inform future engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund.

35. Meanwhile, the national police and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization substantially increased their respective deployments across the country. The training of new recruits and in-service training was conducted by both agencies, as well as the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Liberia National Fire Service, the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Armed Forces of Liberia. Efforts with respect to firearms management progressed; all firearms assigned to the army and the National Security Agency have been marked, with those assigned to the national police and the Executive Protection Service to be marked later in February. A comprehensive strategy aimed at establishing county and district security councils was also pursued during the reporting period.

36. However, limited progress was made in the component of the plan seeking to increase professionalism within the security sector. Critical legislation has not been passed, nor has organizational restructuring been implemented. The draft acts on the police, the immigration service and firearms and ammunition control all remain pending before the Legislature. In addition, enabling administrative systems have not been established and components of the plan focused on human security, such as oversight and accountability, justice, and security delivery, have been overlooked, while a whole-of-Government assessment of the broader implications of the transition has yet to occur.

B. National security strategy and architecture

37. Challenges persisted in the effective operation of the Liberian transnational crime unit, because, among other things, its board did not convene regularly and did not provide effective direction. In addition, the lack of a national strategy to combat transnational and serious crimes, the lack of capacity and insufficient partner support, including funding, hampered its functioning. While the Minister of Justice has undertaken to reinvigorate the unit and formally incorporate it into the country's security sector architecture, this has yet to happen.

C. Liberian National Police

38. As at 15 February, the strength of the national police stood at 5,170 personnel, 18.6 per cent of whom were women. On 24 October, 312 new officers, including 99 women, graduated from the police academy. Advocacy by UNMIL for an increased focus on quality over quantity in the training and development of the police, for the targeting of resources to develop skills and for the effective equipment of existing police personnel resulted in a welcome shift in focus; the projected strength of the upcoming recruit class has been revised from 675 to 108.

39. The national police has increasingly demonstrated the ability to plan and deliver training at all levels. During the reporting period, the police academy's mobile training team provided in-service training in a number of areas, including human rights and protection of civilians, forensics and fleet management. In addition, the police academy supported training for the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Executive Protection Service and held a senior management course for 38 officers, including two women officers. This further enhanced leadership and management skills within the police following the leadership training for 79 officers conducted in 2014 by the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, which is currently providing an additional leadership training course for 14 Liberian law enforcement officers.

40. Concerted efforts were made to address the limited deployment of the police outside Montserrado County, where nearly 80 per cent of police personnel had previously been deployed. In accordance with the Government's transition plan, and with support from UNMIL, the national police devised a plan for the deployment of officers to the other counties, premised on the Mission's drawdown schedule, population density and crime rates. With financing from the Government's budget for the transition, deployment commenced in December; 367 patrol officers are now deployed to the eight border counties. UNMIL supported these efforts, including through training for senior and middle management to develop command, control and communications capacities. Meanwhile, the national police's professional standards division was decentralized to the regional level, with funding from the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections in order to improve discipline and accountability.

D. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization

41. As at 15 February, the strength of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization stood at 2,346 personnel, of whom 30.4 per cent were women. Newly trained recruits were deployed to the counties, bringing the total number of immigration officials deployed outside Monrovia to 1,563. In addition, the Bureau, with the support of UNMIL, provided in-service training on immigration and border security management for 800 officers, including 213 women, with a focus on human trafficking, border control management, document identification and fraud detection, immigration law, border patrol and surveillance and operational planning. The Bureau also completed the drafting of a five-year strategic plan, in line with the draft immigration service act, which addresses legislative and governance reform, human resources development, institutional transformation and revitalization, border security, information management and restructuring.

E. Judicial, legal and corrections institutions

42. Systemic weaknesses in the criminal justice system, including limited internal oversight, weak administrative procedures and an outdated legal framework, continued to cause significant delays in the delivery of justice; pretrial detention dropped slightly to an average of 68 per cent of cases. For instance, of the 199 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in 2015 in Montserrado County, only 8 reached trial. The prison population increased from 1,914 to 2,010 from August 2015 to February 2016, 1,363 of whom were pretrial detainees. The majority of Liberians continued to utilize the traditional justice system for redress, as it is more accessible and responsive.

43. During the reporting period, jury management offices and a unit to facilitate the transfer of cases within the system were established, as were four specialized prosecution units. Consultations on the development of policies on legal aid and witness protection continued. Progress was also made in the justice and security hubs project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund; six additional officers were deployed to support the decentralization of the sexual and gender-based violent crimes unit in the future hubs in Harper, Maryland County, and Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, adding to the three public defenders and three prosecutors previously deployed to those counties as part of the project. A way forward for completing the implementation of the project by aligning it to the transition plan and emphasizing decentralized service delivery by county, rather than by region, was approved in October.

44. The full impact of the significant investment made in the justice system through the project has yet to be registered, however, because of the systemic nature of the aforementioned challenges. Over the past eight years, the Government has endorsed a number of recommendations to address these weaknesses, yet they persist because implementation has not occurred or has been undertaken in an inefficient and uncoordinated manner.

45. Security at corrections facilities remained a concern, despite a reduction in incidents of escapes. Five prison disturbances occurred during the reporting period, resulting from complaints about prolonged pretrial detention or poor treatment. In September, in order to ensure sustainable progress in establishing a professional and functional corrections system in Liberia, UNMIL, together with the prison and probation service of Sweden, trained 25 senior Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation managers, including five women, on strategic issues and leadership skills. All prison superintendents in Liberia also began to use a management development matrix developed by UNMIL to assess senior staff performance on a quarterly basis and facilitate individualized mentoring. Training for 140 newly recruited officers, including 28 women, was to be undertaken with UNMIL support in January to enhance the Bureau's capacity to manage facilities countrywide, but was postponed because of a delay in the disbursement of funds.

F. Armed Forces of Liberia

46. As at 15 February, 2,050 personnel, including 85 women, were serving in the armed forces. The army's deployment remained centralized in Monrovia, along with an engineering company in Gbarnga and a small coastguard detachment at a

forward-operating base in Buchanan. Liberia continued to contribute a platoon to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

47. By resolution 2239 (2015), the Security Council authorized the resumption of the fourth phase of the Mission's drawdown, as a demonstration of its confidence in the ability of the Government to assume fully its complete security responsibilities from UNMIL by 30 June 2016. The proposed reconfiguration of UNMIL, as reflected in my previous report, was considered the minimum capacity required to provide adequate security and protection for United Nations personnel and installations, including for emergency medical services, and a minimum logistical and engineering capacity to support the Mission's operations. The reconfiguration, with the support of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire quick-reaction force, was also considered as having the minimum capacity to provide limited support to the Liberian security agencies in the event of a deterioration of the security situation that could risk a strategic reversal of peace and stability. Meanwhile, UNMIL efforts continued through strategic communications to sensitize the population about the Mission's drawdown and the assumption of security responsibilities by the national authorities.

A. Military component

48. As at 15 February, the UNMIL military strength stood at 3,371 personnel, including 171 women, against the authorized strength of 3,590. The fourth phase of the drawdown of the force to reach a residual level of 1,240 personnel by 30 June continued with the planned reduction of three infantry battalions in Monrovia and in the border areas with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea to one infantry battalion in Monrovia, with related enablers for the purpose of providing a rapid response capacity for the national security agencies should the security situation in Liberia seriously deteriorate. Some transport and engineering units would be reduced. With the reduction in the force's capacity, the 50 military observers will be consolidated in the five UNMIL offices (in Gbarnga, Greenville, Harper, Voinjama and Zwedru) and in Monrovia and will work closely with the United Nations civilian police and the field support offices to perform routine monitoring and reporting duties.

B. Police component

49. As at 15 February, the police strength of UNMIL stood at 1,155 personnel against a mandated ceiling of 1,515 personnel (20 per cent women), including 279 individual police and immigration advisers and 876 police personnel in seven formed police units. Two such units were deployed in Monrovia and one each in Gbarnga, Greenville, Tubmanburg, Voinjama and Zwedru. The drawdown of UNMIL police to 606 by 30 June continued progressively, with a target of 226 individual police and immigration advisers in Monrovia and the five field offices and 380 personnel in three formed police units based in Monrovia, Gbarnga and Zwedru.

50. Pursuant to resolution 2239 (2015), the Mission's police component provided targeted support to the national police and the Bureau of Immigration and

Naturalization, with a particular focus on developing leadership and internal management and accountability mechanisms, strengthening command and control and enhancing management capacities at the county level. UNMIL police, in seeking to build national planning capacities for engagement in the transition process, established, in collaboration with the host State authorities, an implementation structure to track progress in the implementation of the transition plan and to jointly coordinate activities towards the accomplishment of the transition benchmarks.

C. Civilian component

51. Pursuant to resolution 2239 (2015), the Mission's civilian component continued to be streamlined and consolidated. Work is ongoing to reduce the number of sites occupied by UNMIL across the country from 73 to 35 by 30 June, in addition to UNMIL headquarters. The field offices in each of the 15 counties will be consolidated into five offices concentrated in major population and transit centres. These offices will continue to advance implementation of the Mission's mandate, in particular with respect to the security transition, human rights, good offices and political support for governance reforms, as well as support to the Government with regard to the protection of civilians. By 15 February, field offices had been closed in Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, Montserrado, Nimba and River Cess Counties, and their responsibilities transferred, respectively, to the offices in Bomi, Bong, Margibi, Maryland and Grand Bassa Counties.

52. As at 15 February, 1,302 civilian personnel, including 182 United Nations Volunteers, were serving with UNMIL, of a budgeted total of 1,455. In total, 23.2 per cent of the civilian personnel were women, including 26.2 per cent of the 484 substantive staff and 21.4 per cent of the 818 administrative staff.

D. Support considerations

53. The rainy season, from May to October, continued to present challenges: the limited road network in Liberia cannot sustain major logistics movements and flight operations were significantly reduced. There continued to be no in-country commercial alternatives to the UNMIL military and transport units that keep supply lines open, as well as serious shortcomings in the national medical system. In order to sustain the deployment beyond Monrovia of UNMIL civilian and police personnel and facilitate the deployment in extremis of military personnel, including from the quick-reaction force, UNMIL will continue to require some critical enabling capabilities, including heavy-lift ground transportation, air capability, sea transportation, engineering capacity and medical facilities. Where feasible, UNMIL will seek to employ commercial alternatives for the provision of enabling capabilities, including through pooled common services with the United Nations country team. As part of a responsible and well-managed drawdown, UNMIL will continue environmental clean-up activities as military, police, civilian and other mission sites are closed and handed over to the Government or private owners and as United Nations-owned equipment is written off and disposed of, where appropriate.

E. Conduct and discipline

54. During the reporting period, there were four allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against UNMIL personnel and nine of serious misconduct, including one involving UNMIL military personnel in Gbarnga. A national investigating officer was appointed by the troop-contributing country to investigate the Gbarnga case. To achieve the goal of zero instances of sexual exploitation and abuse, UNMIL established committees at its headquarters and in all of its units to monitor, sensitize and report on all issues pertaining to sexual exploitation and abuse. On 9 December, UNMIL launched a campaign to create "Anti-SEA" champions who would lead efforts to respond to allegations and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse at the county level and who would receive complaints and provide assistance to victims through a referral mechanism at the community level. The campaign was successfully expanded countrywide by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

F. Security and safety of United Nations personnel

55. There were no major security incidents affecting United Nations personnel, assets or operations recorded during the reporting period. However, 24 non-weapons-related crimes were committed against United Nations personnel, as well as 5 crimes involving the use of weapons. Three United Nations personnel died from natural causes. There were 115 road traffic accidents involving United Nations personnel and two reports of vandalism to United Nations property. Three incidents of arrest and detention of United Nations personnel were recorded.

V. Observations

56. The successful assumption of security responsibilities by Liberia from UNMIL by 30 June 2016 will be a landmark in the country's history. I am encouraged by the progress made so far in this regard, although much remains to be done for the objectives of the transition plan to be realized in full. I encourage a renewed focus on improving the quality and professionalism of personnel in the Liberian security sector, strengthening their community service orientation and adopting an effective public outreach and engagement strategy for the security transition. These areas are essential to building the trust and confidence of the population in the security sector and to laying the foundations for sustainable peace and stability.

57. I welcome the enhanced performance of the Liberian security agencies and improvements in inter-agency cooperation. As UNMIL continues to draw down its military and police strength while consolidating its civilian presence throughout the country, it is important that national authorities adopt a whole-of-Government approach to comprehensively address the broader implications of the Mission's drawdown. As a first step, a comprehensive national approach to the security transition is essential. I therefore reiterate my call for the Executive and the Legislature to enhance their cooperation to ensure the urgent enactment and implementation of critical legislation relating to the security sector, including the police, immigration service and firearms and ammunition control acts.

58. Liberia is at a critical point in the establishment of a sustainable and reliable security architecture for its citizens. Determining the appropriate timing of the

conduct of the outstanding review of the 2008 national security strategy will be crucial. In addition, the building of capacity of legislative bodies to exercise effective oversight of the security sector and the decentralization of security through the further development of county and district security councils will be vital steps towards strengthening accountability across the sector, ensuring a participatory approach to security and enhancing the response of the relevant institutions to the security needs of communities.

59. The financial challenges faced by the Government in the implementation of the transition plan are of major concern. While the Government must first fulfil its own commitment in this regard, I urge bilateral and multilateral partners to provide support to the security transition, in particular through measures that enhance public trust and confidence in security sector personnel. Failure to do so may result in a fragile security transition that could undermine the many peace consolidation gains made so far in the country. In this regard, I welcome the contribution of the Government of Sweden, which committed an additional \$1.2 million through the Justice and Security Trust Fund, to be utilized in the key areas of early warning, oversight, support for prosecutions and corrections, community policing and witness protection.

60. I welcome the actions taken by the Government in response to serious allegations of corruption and misconduct by public officials. It is important that these steps be followed by credible investigations and due process prosecutions to ensure accountability where such allegations are confirmed. Allegations and perceptions of corruption on the part of public officials undermine people's trust in the Government and defeat its efforts to address deep-seated grievances, such as socioeconomic exclusion and other societal and political cleavages, that remain potential drivers of conflict. I urge the Government to undertake more determined action to battle corruption and to engage more energetically with the public on this issue.

61. I am concerned about the ongoing increase in violent public disturbances, particularly as such violence may become more frequent amid persistent economic challenges and may serve as conflict triggers. While attacks against the national police are not the primary objective of these incidents, it is deeply troubling that some of the public disturbances targeted police installations and police officers. These incidents highlight the lack of public trust and confidence in the justice system, of which the police are the most visible representatives. I urge the Government and the judiciary, with the support of the Mission, to examine and effectively address the key factors behind the public distrust of the justice system and to take forward the nationally validated recommendations from the 2013 criminal justice conference, which set out a comprehensive approach to addressing fundamental and endemic weaknesses across the justice system.

62. The incident on 30 September in Ganta, Nimba County, caused by taxi motorcyclists who believed that a colleague had been the victim of a ritualistic killing, illustrates the urgent need for continued improvements in the deployment of security sector services outside Monrovia, the prioritization of limited resources, the expansion of community policing and the strengthening of command and control structures that would enable the police to effectively prevent, respond to and contain public order situations. I am encouraged by the ongoing efforts to deploy the national police outside Monrovia and indications of improvements in its capacity to

plan for and deploy at public events, although the delay in deployment during the Lofa by-election indicates a need for improved integrated security planning, including in the context of preparations for the election in 2017. Response capacity alone will not ensure security for the people of Liberia. I strongly urge the Government to ensure that police deployments are used to strengthen prevention measures at the county level by focusing on outreach and mediation efforts, including through increased emphasis on community policing and the effective functioning of county and district security councils when they are rolled out.

63. Likewise, public concern over suspected ritualistic killings and the consequent violent reactions are deeply troubling. I welcome the joint publication by UNMIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of the report on harmful traditional practices that are fundamentally inconsistent with Liberia's international human rights obligations. I strongly urge the Government to implement the recommendations set out in that report and tackle these human rights violations by urgently addressing not only ritualistic killings, but also female genital mutilation and other serious human rights violations. I welcome the continued efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, although I remain deeply concerned about the scale of these offences, and I strongly urge the Government and all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to counter this scourge. I welcome the increased engagement of the Government with United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, the special procedures and the treaty bodies, and I strongly encourage the Government to sustain this engagement.

64. I am concerned, however, at the slow pace of key political and institutional reforms that are essential for promoting and sustaining reconciliation. Greater political commitment by all Liberian institutions and civil society to constitutional reform, decentralization, land reform and good governance, including natural resources management and an efficient, transparent, accountable and independent judiciary, are vital for the Government to be able to address victims' rights and build the trust of the people. I urge the timely consideration and enactment by the Legislature of the draft land rights and land authority acts, as well as the draft local governance act. In addition, I call upon all Liberian stakeholders to renew their commitment to expediting constitutional reform.

65. While progress with regard to national development does have a bearing on many of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there should be greater rigour in assessing the implementation of each recommendation. Consistent, factual, timely and comprehensive reporting on the implementation process is also essential in order to reassure the public that these recommendations are being taken forward. I encourage the Government to promote a political environment conducive to the full implementation of all the recommendations, including those relating to criminal accountability, which, to date, remain largely unaddressed.

66. While I was troubled by the re-emergence of Ebola in Liberia in November, I am greatly encouraged by the swift and determined response of the national authorities to the limited outbreak, especially the steps swiftly taken to implement contact tracing and monitoring. The re-emergence of Ebola in Sierra Leone only one day after the entire region was declared Ebola-free underscores the potential for

future relapses and the need for caution. It also highlights the importance of continued vigilance and regional cooperation.

67. I welcome the continued efforts by the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to improve coordination on border stabilization, in particular by convening the second meeting of the joint council of chiefs and elders, in January, which built on the quadripartite process reinvigorated in March 2015 after the Ebola epidemic had abated. I also welcome the resumption of the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees in December. These developments demonstrate the progress made in the region towards resilient and sustainable peace. I encourage the two Governments to continue to build a safe and secure border environment to facilitate the ongoing voluntary repatriation of refugees and to mitigate concerns with regard to border violence, as set out in my previous report.

68. As I noted in that report, the conclusion of the security transition should trigger a reimagining of the United Nations engagement in Liberia. The Security Council, in resolution 2239 (2015), requested me to provide to the Council a report by 15 November 2016 with recommendations on the future of UNMIL and possible successor options to continue to support the Government. I therefore encourage the Government again to continue to explore options for bilateral or regional partnerships in preparation for the eventual withdrawal of UNMIL. In addition, I welcome the sustained engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission to accompany Liberia as it continues to make progress in peace consolidation.

69. I wish to thank my Special Representative for Liberia, Farid Zarif, as well as all UNMIL personnel, for their dedication to sustaining peace and stability in Liberia. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, other regional and subregional organizations, multilateral and bilateral development partners, the Peacebuilding Commission, the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations for their continued and sustained commitment and contributions to peace and security in Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength as at 15 February 2016

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Police officers
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Argentina	–	–	–	–		3
Bangladesh	7	5	255	267		6
Benin	–	1	–	1		–
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	–	–	2		–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	–	–	–	–		2
Brazil	2	1	–	3		–
Bulgaria	2	–	–	2		–
China	1	2	508	511	140	12
Ecuador	1	–	–	1		–
Egypt	5	–	–	5		4
Ethiopia	5	4	–	9		–
France	–	1	–	1		–
Gambia	1	–	–	1		5
Germany	2	1	–	3		3
Ghana	10	7	808	825		20
India	–	–	–	–	120	10
Indonesia	1	–	–	1		–
Jordan	–	–	–	–	237	15
Kenya	–	–	–	–		18
Kyrgyzstan	2	–	–	2		3
Malaysia	3	1	–	4		–
Myanmar	2	–	–	2		–
Namibia	1	1	–	2		5
Nepal	2	2	15	19	259	13
Niger	2	–	–	2		–
Nigeria	6	7	1 391	1 404	120	26
Norway	–	–	–	–		16
Pakistan	4	9	88	101		–
Poland	1	–	–	1		3
Republic of Korea	–	–	–	–		3
Republic of Moldova	2	–	–	2		–
Romania	2	–	–	2		2
Russian Federation	2	–	–	2		2
Rwanda	–	–	–	–		3

Country	Military component				Formed police units	Police officers
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total		
Serbia	4	—	—	4	—	—
Sri Lanka	—	—	—	—	—	16
Sweden	—	—	—	—	—	11
Switzerland	—	—	—	—	—	1
Thailand	—	—	—	—	—	2
Togo	2	1	—	3	—	—
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	4
Uganda	—	—	—	—	—	6
Ukraine	1	2	172	175	—	6
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	—	—	—	—	—	1
United States of America	4	5	—	9	—	1
Yemen	—	1	—	1	—	9
Zambia	2	—	—	2	—	19
Zimbabwe	2	—	—	2	—	29
Total	83	51	3 237	14	876	279

